

ces under which this alteration was made. It has been done by other gentlemen in the progress of this discussion. For the purposes of my argument it is immaterial whether it was adopted as has been stated, in a time of great excitement and consequent panic, or whether it was the result of calm and deliberate legislation. It stands as one of the compromises in the Constitution of the State, and striking from it "federal numbers," I am willing to abide by it.

Under the system of past representation the State has prospered and flourished. Her population has increased—her people have been as free and as happy as any other people upon earth. They have been protected in their lives, in their liberty, and in their property. No wrong has ever been perpetrated upon them, and the ends of government have not been perverted.

But the gentleman from Baltimore city, (Mr. Brent,) says, that a wrong has been committed upon them. And what is that wrong? Why that the legislature would not consent until 1836, that the Governor should be directly elected by the people. This may have been wrong in theory, but did it ever in practice work a wrong upon the people? Was the chair of State, before that time, filled by a tyrant? Were the rights and liberties of the people disregarded and trampled under foot? Were they required to ask from him upon their knees his executive clemency? His duties were prescribed by the Constitution and the laws.

The records of the past sustain the assertion, that the former Governors of the State discharged their duties with a fidelity to the people, and a degree of ability which have not been surpassed, since the election of that officer was taken from the legislature, and placed where it now resides. It is right that the Governor should be elected by the direct vote of the people.—This power was properly given to them in 1836, and had I then been a member of the legislature, the amendment would have received my cordial support. Yet, I am here to deny that any wrong or oppression had been practised upon the people by any one of the Governors, who had been placed in that high and honorable station under the former mode of election. And this is the only wrong which the ingenuity of gentlemen from the more populous sections has been able to raise up from the ashes of the past, as a consequence of the system of representation in this State.

I assert, without the fear of successful contradiction, that there can be found no instance in the history of legislative proceedings in Maryland, where the more popular parts of the State have been injured and oppressed. On the contrary, the whole system of legislation towards them, has been of the most liberal character. The mountains of the West have been unlocked, and their store-houses of wealth opened to the hand of industry and enterprise. Lands, which to the eye presented upon their surface but a rude and barren aspect, have been overturned, and the mineral treasures which they contained, have been brought into active use. Counties,

remote from navigation and unwashed by rivers, inviting to their bosom the "wings of commerce," have now their railroad and canals, upon which the products of their rich fields can be borne to a ready market. And what has been the progress of Baltimore city? She has increased from a mere handful until her corporate limits now contain a population of over one hundred and sixty-nine thousand. Works of internal improvement are stretching forth their arms to gather wealth and pour it into her lap. Located one hundred miles nearer the Lakes, than the city of New York, the time is not far distant when she must command their immense trade. Her commerce "whitening every sea," spreads wealth among her people. Her destiny is onward, and in the revolution of some few years more, she will contain one half of the population of the State.

This is the prosperity, which has been visited upon the more populous parts of the State, under the fostering influence of past legislation. No wrong, no injury and no oppression have ever been inflicted upon them, by the system of representation heretofore adopted. Yet, we are told, that it must be changed. It has been said that "the clarion note of reform was sounded"—that in obedience to the answering voice of the gathered people, we are here assembled, and that this is the main duty with which they have charged us.

I deny that the system of representation was the cause of the call of this convention. Was it the reason urged in the report, of the committee on Reform, made during the session of the last Legislature? Was it urged in argument upon the floor of either House? The learned gentleman from Baltimore who was one of the champions of the law, which has given form and proportion to this Convention, did not cite it as one of the grievances under which the State was suffering. It was not claimed as a reason for the call of a Convention by the able delegate from Harford in the last Legislature, or other distinguished gentlemen who spoke upon that subject, at least so far as I have been able to learn. No sir; other reforms, it was said, were needed. The judiciary, the mode of appointing officers, the powers of the legislative branch to loan the credit of the State—these required revision and reform. The Constitution too, from the various amendments which had been made from time to time, had grown out of shape and beauty of proportion, and it required the "skilful touchings" of a Convention, which might devote to its consideration its whole labors, to give it perspicuity and harmonise its parts. If representation laid at the foundation of the call of this Convention, it was carefully kept out of view in the arguments made in the Legislature by the advocates of Conventional Reform. But a claim for a most radical change in this feature of the government, has been made here by gentlemen from the more populous parts of the State. Most of the smaller counties foresaw that it would be, and they will not consent to be stripped of the little power left them by the adjustment in 1836, without,